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PRESS RELEASE:

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FIREWORKS SAFETY

As the 4th of July holiday approaches, West Virginians are preparing to celebrate with cookouts, family reunions and other get-togethers. Unfortunately, these celebrations can quickly turn disastrous for families, especially when children and teenagers are injured, sometimes permanently, by so-called "safe and sane" fireworks.

Permissible under West Virginia law are items called "Novelties and Sparklers", which include "snakes" and "glow worms", smoke devices that produce white or colored smoke, trick noisemakers which include "party poppers", "string poppers", and "snappers" or "drop pops", and wire sparklers, as well as other sparkling devices which emit showers of sparks and sometimes a whistling or crackling effect when burning.

BY STATE LAW, NONE OF THESE NOVELTIES, SPARKLERS AND SPARKLER DEVICES IS TO BE SOLD TO ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF 16.

In West Virginia, the most dangerous types of fireworks **prohibited by law** include large reloadable shells, festival balls or shots, cherry bombs, aerial bombs (sky rockets, Roman candles), daygo bombs, M-80 salutes and firecrackers. Also banned are the mail-order kits designed to build fireworks.

VIOLATION OF THE FIREWORKS LAW IS A CITABLE OFFENSE.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), fireworks consistently cause more damage to property than all other outdoor fire causes combined for the Fourth of July (day) in the United States. In 2004, over \$21 million loss was reported in direct property damage.

But even worse is the damage to human life. In 2005, an estimated 10,800 people were treated in emergency rooms for fireworks-related injuries.

NFPA reports nearly half of the people injured by fireworks in 2005 were under the age of 15. Unfortunately, children between the ages of 10-14 suffer nearly 3 times the risk for fireworks-related injuries as the rest of the population. Sparklers, fountain and other novelties by themselves accounted for 26% of the fireworks injuries treated in emergency rooms in 2005—these are the so-called “safe and sane” fireworks. Every year, statistics prove **THERE ARE TRULY NO “SAFE AND SANE” FIREWORKS!**

The risk of fire death relative to exposure shows fireworks as the most risky consumer product. When in use, fireworks pose the greatest risk of death from fire to consumers. Although careless smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths, the chances of someone dying in a fire caused by fireworks is three times greater than the corresponding risk when a cigarette is in use.

Burns are the leading cause of injury from fireworks, followed by lacerations and contusions, all primarily involving the fingers, hands, eyes, and facial area. In 2005, 54% of the fireworks injuries were burns; 29% were contusions/lacerations.

What can you do to prevent fireworks injuries? The West Virginia State Fire Marshal's Office advises that, by far, the safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend an outdoor public display put on by specially trained pyrotechnic professionals.

However, if you do choose to use the permitted sparklers and novelties, these safety tips should also be kept in mind:

- **USE SPARKLERS AND NOVELTIES ONLY WITH EXTREME CAUTION.**
Older children should be closely supervised and younger children should not be allowed to play with fireworks at all. It makes no sense to compromise the personal safety of a child or teenager by giving them blistering hot sparklers or other devices in return for a few minutes of entertainment that could result in tragedy. SPARKLERS BURN AT TEMPERATURES OF WELL OVER 1,200 DEGREES F. —that's hot enough to melt some metals!
- **NO RUNNING OR HORSEPLAY** should ever be permitted while using fireworks. Children do not understand the danger involved and cannot act appropriately to protect themselves if something goes wrong.

- BEFORE USING ANY LEGAL FIREWORKS, read and follow all warning instructions printed on the label.
- LIGHT ALL ITEMS OUTSIDE in a clear area away from houses, yard debris such as grass, brush, leaves, etc., and away from flammable materials (gasoline cans, newspapers, etc.).
- ALWAYS KEEP A BUCKET OF WATER nearby for emergencies and for pouring on items that fail to ignite.
- NEVER TRY TO RELIGHT or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Douse and soak them with water, then properly dispose of them.
- ALWAYS make sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.
- NEVER set off more than one item at a time.
- KEEP unused fireworks away from firing areas.
- NEVER carry fireworks in your pocket.
- NEVER EXPERIMENT with homemade fireworks.
- NEVER IGNITE FIREWORKS IN A CONTAINER, especially in a glass or metal container. Fireworks are more hazardous when confined.
- NEVER throw fireworks at another person.
- STORE fireworks in a cool, dry, secure place. Check instructions for special storage directions.
- NEVER TOUCH UNEXPLODED FIREWORKS, and make sure children understand never to touch them.

The West Virginia State Fire Marshal's Office wishes everyone a safe, happy summer season. But please remember: it's everyone's special responsibility to protect our young children and teenagers by ensuring their safety, especially when exposing them to amateur use of fireworks.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON CONSUMER FIREWORKS SAFETY, PLEASE VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES:

www.nfpa.org

www.usfa.org

www.cpsc.gov

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